

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

March 4, 2010

President Obama Sends Trade Policy Agenda to Congress.....	1
Iran Could Face Further Economic Sanctions over Nuclear Program	1
Global U.S. Assistance Is Strategically Focused.....	2
NASA Scientist Bridges Universe Between Morocco and U.S.	4
Arab-American Group Extends Helping Hand to Haiti	5

President Obama Sends Trade Policy Agenda to Congress

2010 agenda emphasizes expanding market access, enforcing rules

Washington — President Obama, in his 2010 Trade Policy Agenda sent to Congress March 1, pledged the United States will build on existing trade agreements to strengthen the global trading system and uphold American values and commitments around the world.

The president has set a goal of doubling U.S. exports in the next five years to support another 2 million American jobs. The 2010 trade agenda explains how the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), the president's principal adviser on trade issues, will support this initiative through new market openings and trade enforcement.

"Ninety-five percent of the world's consumers live outside the United States, and the president's trade agenda will help to get American workers and businesses access to as many of those customers as possible — in ways that affirm our rights in the global trading system and that reflect American values on worker rights, the environment and open dialogue here at home," said USTR Ron Kirk on March 1. "The priorities in this agenda can work to strengthen the rules-based global trading system on which the nations of the world depend, while opening markets and ensuring that American businesses and workers receive the economic benefits of trade."

Delivery of the agenda to Congress each year by March 1 is mandated by law. USTR is the agency responsible for developing the agenda and for reporting to Congress on the administration's progress on trade issues.

The agenda items highlighted by USTR include the following:

- Support and strengthen a rules-based trading system. The United States strongly supports an ambitious and balanced Doha agreement that liberalizes three core market-access areas: agriculture, goods and services.
- Enforce rights in the rules-based trading system. USTR will strengthen further monitoring and enforcement, bringing cases at the World Trade Organization (WTO) as necessary, will increase focus on nontariff barriers that hinder exports, and will fully enforce labor and environmental rights in trade agreements.
- Enhance U.S. growth, job creation and innovation. The United States will emphasize bilateral relations with emerging markets as well as with long-standing key partners, and will pursue regional engagement,

particularly negotiation of a Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement to access key markets in the Asia-Pacific for decades to come.

- Work to resolve outstanding issues with pending free trade agreements (FTAs) and build on existing agreements. Proper resolution and implementation of the pending FTAs with Panama, Colombia and South Korea can bring significant economic benefits. In 2010, USTR will continue to consult with Congress and the public and to engage with these nations to address outstanding issues. It will also strengthen relationships with current partners such as Canada, Mexico, Japan and the European Union.

- Facilitate progress on national energy and environmental goals. Good trade policy can accelerate the success of sound energy and environmental initiatives and can complement sustainable growth. USTR will support fast-tracking action with willing partners in the WTO's work on liberalizing trade in innovative, climate-friendly goods and services through tariff reductions and other initiatives.

- Foster stronger partnerships with developing and poor nations. The Obama administration supports expanding trade opportunities to stimulate market-led growth and help improve the lives of people in the least-developed nations. Opportunities created by open markets and preferences such as the Generalized System of Preferences require complementary measures such as technical assistance and market-based and rule-of-law reforms to maximize their benefits, USTR said.

Iran Could Face Further Economic Sanctions over Nuclear Program

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The Iranian regime's refusal to provide a full disclosure of its nuclear development program to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will leave the international community no choice but to pursue further, deeper economic sanctions, U.S. Ambassador Glyn Davies said March 3.

The IAEA 35-nation board of governors is holding a weeklong meeting in Vienna, and the major topic has been Iran and its nuclear development program.

"Iran has not suspended its enrichment and heavy water-related programs, as required by the U.N. Security Council and the board of governors," said Davis, who is the U.S. permanent representative to the IAEA in Vienna. Western nations fear that Iran may be trying to develop nuclear weapons. Uranium enrichment is one necessary

component of weapons development to build a nuclear bomb.

"We find ourselves eight years into an investigation which Iran seems determined to defy, obfuscate and stymie," Davies said.

The U.N. Security Council previously imposed three rounds of political and economic sanctions to convince Iranian leaders to halt uranium enrichment and give up plans for a weapons program. In November 2009, the IAEA board voted to censure Iran for building a second uranium enrichment plant at Qom, and the Iranian regime followed up by announcing plans to build 10 more plants to enrich uranium. Iran's primary nuclear development facility is near the city of Natanz.

Newly elected IAEA Director-General Yukiya Amano told the board March 1 that his investigators "cannot confirm that all nuclear material in Iran is in peaceful activities because Iran has not provided the agency with the necessary cooperation. I request Iran to take steps toward the full implementation of its safeguards agreement and its other obligations as a matter of high priority."

The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — plus Germany have been conducting intensive talks with Iranian officials over their nuclear program. This group grew out of earlier efforts by Britain, France and Germany to convince Iran to suspend uranium enrichment in return for a package of incentives. Three years ago, the six powers also offered Iran a package of trade and diplomatic incentives to forgo its uranium enrichment efforts, and later added to the incentives, but Iranian authorities continued to reject suspension of uranium enrichment.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told the Senate in February that a new set of sanctions is likely from the Security Council. But she also told another congressional committee that the United States may pursue another course.

"We will look at additional bilateral and preferably multilateral sanctions with willing nations, on top of whatever we get out of the Security Council," Clinton said February before the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

The Spanish delegation to the IAEA board meeting, which is representing the European Union, issued a strong warning to Iran to comply with Security Council resolutions or face a fourth set of sanctions. It has been reported by news media that the next set of sanctions could focus on the banking, shipping and insurance

sectors of Iran's economy.

SANCTIONS IMPOSED

Since 2006, the Security Council has imposed three sets of sanctions that are still in effect. The first set concerns sensitive nuclear materials and froze the assets of individual Iranians and some companies. The second set included new arms and financial sanctions, and the third set added further travel and financial sanctions.

The United States shut Iran's Bank Saderat out of the U.S. financial system in September 2006. It did the same thing to Bank Melli and Bank Mellat in October 2007. The United States has also sanctioned Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard, which controls the nuclear development program. And the U.S. Congress is considering legislation that would require more and deeper sanctions.

The European Union has imposed visa bans on senior Iranian officials and Iran's top nuclear and ballistics experts. Britain froze more than \$1.6 billion in Iranian assets under EU- and U.N.-imposed sanctions. Britain has also frozen business ties with Bank Mellat and the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines.

"Iran's continued production of low-enriched uranium and its move to enrich up to nearly 20 percent are, unfortunately, just the latest additions to the long list of steps Iran has taken in disregard of its obligations to all of us," Davies told the IAEA board. "We hope that Iran will change its current course and seek the path of negotiations."

"Not doing so leaves the international community no choice but to pursue further, deeper sanctions to hold Iran accountable," he said.

Global U.S. Assistance Is Strategically Focused

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — The role of U.S. foreign assistance in improving global health, feeding the hungry, responding to climate change and providing humanitarian aid is to save lives and enhance livelihoods, but also to make people less vulnerable to poverty and the chaos that extreme poverty breeds, says Rajiv Shah, administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

"Investment in development has never been more strategically important than it is today," Shah said in prepared testimony at a congressional hearing March 3. "Helping nations to grow and prosper is not only the moral obligation of a great nation; it is also in our national

interest.”

“The investments we make today are a bulwark against current and future threats — both seen and unseen — and a down payment for future peace and prosperity around the world,” he added.

Shah testified before the House of Representatives’ Foreign Affairs Committee on the proposed fiscal year 2011 State Department and USAID combined budget, focusing on the role of development assistance. The House committee and its counterpart in the Senate hold hearings on the proposed budget to determine if the agency’s request is in line with U.S. foreign policy objectives, and if the appropriation of federal funds serves the country’s best interests.

House Foreign Affairs Chairman Howard Berman said in his opening remarks that while alleviating human suffering around the world is the morally right thing to do, foreign assistance programs also serve U.S. economic and national security interests. He added that one of the committee’s legislative priorities is to reform foreign assistance laws and programs to ensure the aid reaches those most in need, and it is delivered with maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

“By building schools, training police and increasing agricultural production, we help lay the foundations for a more stable future in those volatile nations,” Berman said.

In accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in December 2009, President Obama set the standard for U.S. foreign assistance when he said that “security does not exist when people do not have access to enough food, or clean water, or the medicine and shelter they need to survive,” Shah said in prepared testimony released by the committee. And Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in defining U.S. objectives that development and diplomacy, along with defense, make up the foundation for the nation’s national security, he added.

Shah said that in the immediate aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Haiti, USAID provided a coordinated U.S. response along with other federal agencies and the military in support of the Haitian government’s efforts to provide assistance for its people. “Together we have provided a comprehensive response to a complex disaster whose scope far exceeds any other that the administration has faced internationally and one that requires a continued aggressive and unique approach,” Shah said. “We worked collaboratively with the government of Haiti and a host of other governments, the United Nations, other international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and with thousands of generous and concerned individuals.”

Shah said that building the capacity of countries to meet basic needs is what guides USAID. He cited three specific development priorities contained in its FY 2011 budget that contribute directly to U.S. national security:

- Securing critical front-line states — \$7.7 billion in State Department and USAID assistance to support U.S. development programs in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq.
- Meeting global challenges — \$14.6 billion in State and USAID assistance to support local and global efforts to resolve problems in global health, poverty reduction, natural and manmade disasters, and threats of instability from climate change and rapid population growth.
- Enhancing aid effectiveness and sustainability — \$1.7 billion to support the rebuilding of USAID personnel and agency infrastructure.

AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN AND IRAQ

“By far the largest component of our requested budget increase is dedicated to the critical states of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq,” Shah told the committee. The focus in Afghanistan in the past several years has been on greater stability and security, he said.

In 2002, 8 percent of the Afghan population had access to some form of health care, but by 2009 that number had risen to 84 percent, Shah said, because of USAID commitments. Under the Taliban regime about 900,000 boys and no girls were enrolled in schools, but as of 2009, more than 6 million children were enrolled in schools, and 35 percent were girls, he said, through USAID educational initiatives and support.

In Pakistan USAID and its partners helped expand educational opportunities, rebuilt schools and increased support for higher education, Shah said. USAID provided training for 10,852 health care providers, 82 percent of whom were women, and provided essential care to nearly 400,000 newborns.

Shah said USAID programs in Pakistan have helped generate 700,000 jobs in 2009, which includes training for more than 10,000 women in modern agricultural techniques.

In Iraq USAID has transitioned to a new phase in civilian assistance, shifting away from reconstruction toward bolstering local capacity that supports Iraqi priorities. “We are working in partnership with the government of Iraq, whose investment in their own development matches or exceeds at least 50 percent of U.S. foreign assistance funds,” he said.

Specific USAID work in Iraq is directed at economic development and strengthening the agricultural sector, which is the largest employer of Iraqis after the

government, Shah said.

NASA Scientist Bridges Universe Between Morocco and U.S.

Kamal Oudrhiri helps promote space education, cultural celebration

By Carrie Loewenthal Massey
Special Correspondent

Washington — “My story is somewhat unusual because since a very early age I was always mesmerized by the stars and the vastness of the universe,” Kamal Oudrhiri reminisced.

Perhaps more unusual than Oudrhiri’s fascination with outer space, however, is his gumption to follow his dreams: to work with the United States’ National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and now, to help other children realize their dreams, as well as to build in his community an understanding of Moroccan and American cultural commonalities.

Oudrhiri’s tale is one of adventure and daring, a young man of 18 who traveled from his home in Morocco to Los Angeles with only a secondary school diploma to his name.

“I didn’t speak a single word of English and I didn’t know anyone,” Oudrhiri said. “I barely had enough money to last me a couple of months. Los Angeles seemed so far away from Morocco, and in the late 1980s there was no Internet, no satellite TV, and the cost to call my family in Morocco with AT&T was about \$5 per minute. I was practically a world away.”

Oudrhiri quickly forged a path for himself, never turning his back on his dreams and never returning home to live. Now a scientist at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory near Los Angeles, Oudrhiri not only contributes his knowledge to the space program, but also donates his time, creativity and passion to the two nonprofit organizations he established in pursuit of the other missions close to his heart.

In 2003, Oudrhiri founded the organization Grove of Hope with two objectives.

First, he wanted to increase African classroom teachers’ awareness of and accessibility to NASA’s teaching resources.

“NASA spends millions of dollars developing education materials for teachers and they’re free. Schools in the U.S. and Europe use them, but in Africa teachers, didn’t know how to access and use them,” Oudrhiri said.

Grove of Hope organizes events like Science Week Morocco 2009. NASA and university-affiliated volunteers led three days of workshops that introduced Moroccan teachers to an array of innovative science lessons they could bring into their classrooms. Oudrhiri witnessed the positive impact such lessons can have on students’ curiosity for and ability to explore space mysteries as Moroccan schoolchildren participated in interactive lab activities that Grove of Hope furnished for the event.

“I cannot separate the work we do at NASA from what excites children all over the world. You have to see their eyes and their big smiles when space is involved,” Oudrhiri said.

For more on Science Week Morocco 2009, see “NASA Enhances Space Expertise Through Middle East Alliances.”

Grove of Hope has also worked with teachers from Senegal, Ivory Coast and Mauritania, and has plans to collaborate in Ghana and Cameroon.

To continue to expand its reach, the organization next plans to create a science center in Casablanca to which teachers from other African countries could travel for training. Oudrhiri explained that the location of such a center in Morocco would ease logistical and financial burdens of travel for American volunteers carrying supplies to various African countries, while positioning resources in an accessible place for African participants. Grove of Hope’s intent is to reach as many teachers and students as possible.

“We want to truly help the next generation in Africa. To do that we have to get them excited and inspired about science and technology so they can manage resources better and understand changes in their environment,” Oudrhiri said.

Along with its work in Africa, Grove of Hope strives to meet its other objective of bringing a zeal for and understanding of science to American students. The organization helps inner-city Los Angeles schools obtain funding for science and technology programs, and wants to begin training teachers.

Grove of Hope gets all its money through fundraising initiatives. Oudrhiri and his partners try to tap into their personal interests, like music and athletics, to organize concerts and other events that bring the Los Angeles community together. Years of running and training others for marathons led Oudrhiri to pioneer a major fundraiser: the City of Angels Half Marathon. The half marathon continues to grow in popularity, and Grove of Hope donates all proceeds to Los Angeles schools.

CELEBRATING CULTURAL SIMILARITIES

Just as Grove of Hope supports education in both Africa and the United States, so too does Oudrhiri's other organization, the Moroccan American Cultural Center of Los Angeles (MACCLA), aim to benefit the people of both Morocco and the United States by celebrating cultural similarities.

"MACCLA is for people who are interested in the fusion between Morocco and the United States. We have a lot of common history and I'm more interested in bringing the commonalities to people," Oudrhiri said.

Oudrhiri's perception of the cultural aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks drove him to found MACCLA in 2005.

"After 9/11 people started focusing on how the people in Muslim countries are so different than people in the West, and I felt, no, let's refocus on what we have in common. MACCLA is not Morocco; it's not America; it's what brings both of them together," he said.

The organization uses academic, music and art programming to demonstrate these cultural commonalities to the public. For example, in 2009, MACCLA collaborated with the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) African Studies Center to send 15 elementary school teachers to Morocco for five weeks.

The teachers spent each week in a different region of the country to give them a broad exposure to the many intricacies of Moroccan culture, language and history. Upon their return, the teachers had to implement in their classrooms lessons based from their travel experiences. A grant from the Fulbright Program, an international exchange program sponsored by the U.S. State Department, provided funding for the trip.

In 2008, Oudrhiri produced and was the artistic director for MACCLA's musical and dance production *Fez: Queen of Cities*. The performance celebrated the 1,200th anniversary of the city of Fez, home to the oldest university in the world and the spiritual and religious center of Morocco, according to MACCLA. The show highlighted the active role women played in the city's society, even 1,000 years ago. Musicians from Europe, Asia and Africa partnered with contemporary dancers from Los Angeles to stage the production on a tour of cities that included Geneva, Los Angeles, New York, Rabat, Paris and Barcelona.

Oudrhiri felt most anxious about taking the show to Rabat and a home audience.

"It was a little nerve-wracking for me because you are

there and trying to tell them their history and then it's performed by Americans, so you're always nervous about how it will be perceived. But we got amazing reviews from the Moroccan crowd," he said.

MACCLA next plans to partner with the UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies to film a short piece for the "Moroccan Tutor" program, an online instructional tool that teaches Moroccan Arabic to American middle and secondary school students. A young Moroccan-American boy and girl will tape 12 language lessons.

His contribution to "Moroccan Tutor" in effect brings Oudrhiri's journey full circle. When he first set foot on Los Angeles's Pacific shores at 18 years old, unable to speak English, "the sound of the ocean waves was the only sound that brought happiness to my heart" because it "reminded me of those moments with my family along the Atlantic Ocean near Casablanca," Oudrhiri said. Now fluent in English, and well-versed in American culture, Oudrhiri's contributions to language and science education, as well as cultural exchange, enrich the lives of people in both of his homes. Programs like "Moroccan Tutor" may just give young Americans with dreams of working in Africa the tools they need to succeed across vast oceans.

Arab-American Group Extends Helping Hand to Haiti

Arab American Cultural Center of Oregon has big plans

By Steve Holgate

Special Correspondent

Portland, Oregon – January 12's devastating earthquake in Haiti has precipitated a worldwide outpouring of compassion and assistance. The U.S. government has donated approximately \$467 million to help Haitians. American nongovernmental organizations have donated more than \$770 million to help feed, clothe and provide medical attention.

However, one of the best examples of American giving is provided by a small organization, the Arab American Cultural Center of Oregon (AACCO).

AACCO began its life three years ago and received official status as a charitable organization only recently. Based in Portland, Oregon, it has a very small, informal membership. Yet it has already developed ambitious programs, not only to provide relief to the people of Haiti but to support the Arab-American community in Oregon.

If it seems unusual that a small organization should direct efforts toward an enormous tragedy in Haiti, it seems perfectly logical to AACCO's president, Hala Gores. In a recent interview with America.gov, Gores said, "It's important for us to teach our kids that they're not just

connected to the Middle East, and not just to the community in Oregon, but that they owe their brothers and sisters around the world a helping hand."

The focus of AACCO's fundraising effort for Haiti is a sale of items donated by the members of Oregon's Arab-American community. The event, called "The AACCO Haiti Benefit Community Sale and Baklava Without Borders Bake Sale for Haiti," will be open to the public and feature Arabic music, coffee and baklava, made and donated by a local Arab American who owns a doughnut shop.

Members of the organization will staff the event, to be held in a local church. Gores, a prominent local attorney, said the group hopes to raise \$2,000, which will be sent to Haiti through the private relief organization Mercy Corps, also based in Oregon. Gores promises that there will be plenty of items for sale. "I have a three-car garage, and I can't park in it, it's so full of boxes for the sale," she said, laughing.

While Gores and other adult members put together their fundraising event for Haiti, their children are already pitching in. Gores smiles proudly as she tells how her 10-year-old son and a friend have added their own toys and belongings to the contribution.

Though AACCO has raised funds for various causes in the Middle East, the Haiti fundraiser reflects an interest in helping neighbors, too. Last year, flooding displaced many members of the Lummi Indian tribe of Washington state. AACCO helped to obtain and deliver a large truckload of household goods as well as cash to the strapped tribe.

In fact, the Haiti fundraiser is only the latest in a string of events organized or co-sponsored by AACCO. AACCO has helped organize concerts, produced plays and participated in multicultural festivals. Among its most recent activities, AACCO organized a formal tribute to former Oregon Governor Vic Atiyeh, the country's first Arab-American governor, and put on an Arab-style Thanksgiving Day dinner on the theme "We are one family." The dinner, Gores said, proved hugely successful. "We were hoping for 150 people, and more than 300 showed up."

Many of the guests were non-Arabs who wished to share in an Arab-American experience. They even included a Japanese diplomat based in Portland. Gores said, "This is our way of really reaching out to Oregonians."

Gores makes it clear, though, that AACCO's goals go beyond organizing events. Educational seminars, conferences, dinners and artistic productions help fulfill AACCO's goal of promoting Arab-American culture. The

organization, though, has committed itself to preserving that culture in the context of American society. "We would like to be the hand that's extended to Arab immigrants when they arrive, to assist them in understanding how to assimilate while holding on to what they dearly value."

Gores said the phone at her law office rings every day with someone from the local Arab-American community asking for help. Offering one example of the range of assistance and advice, Gores tells of one family that called her because of concern that the daughter's classmates might tease her for wearing a hijab. Gores was able to tell them of a public school located near a mosque where a number of girls wear a hijab and she might feel comfortable. "We are a resource," Gores said. "We are a helping hand to them."

Gores also makes it clear that the focus is on Arab Americans regardless of their religion. "Our focus is of a strictly cultural nature," Gores said. "It's important that we welcome people from all walks of life, whether they are Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs or Jewish Arabs."

This broad appeal is reflected in the genesis of AACCO. Gores said she and the members of the group are modeling their organization on a highly successful local Jewish community center, which offers extensive sports and other facilities on a site covering several hectares. The children of AACCO members have been welcomed there and participate in its activities. AACCO hopes one day to play the same sort of focused yet inclusive role. "Though," said Gores, "it may be our grandchildren who live to see that."

(Preceding items distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://america.gov>)